



Patrick J. Leahy

War Victims Fund

A Program of the U.S. Agency for International Development

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*A century ago,
the majority of war casualties
were combatants.*

*Today,
they are overwhelmingly
innocent civilians,
caught in the crossfire.*

- Senator Patrick J. Leahy -

Vietnam

Vietnam has suffered the effects of war for more than half a century, and an ensuing 20 years of international isolation has impoverished a high percentage of the Vietnamese people and left the country with critical gaps in its public health infrastructure.

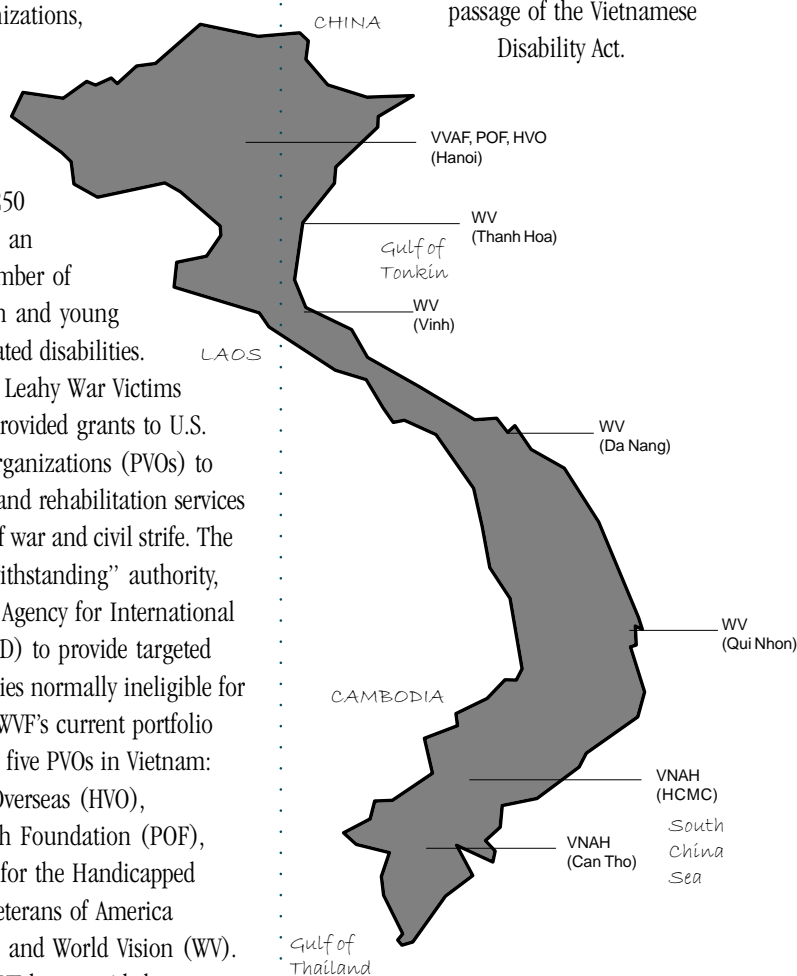
According to some international organizations, Vietnam contains the world's highest proportion of amputees: 1 amputee for every 250 people. In addition, an unusually high number of Vietnamese children and young adults have war-related disabilities.

Since 1991, the Leahy War Victims Fund (LWVF) has provided grants to U.S. private voluntary organizations (PVOs) to provide prosthetics and rehabilitation services to civilian victims of war and civil strife. The LWVF carries "notwithstanding" authority, permitting the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to provide targeted assistance to countries normally ineligible for U.S. support. The LWVF's current portfolio consists of grants to five PVOs in Vietnam: Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO), Prosthetics Outreach Foundation (POF), Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH), Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF), and World Vision (WV).

To date, the LWVF has provided approximately \$11 million to support the provision of tens of thousands of orthopedic

devices and wheelchairs, training for hundreds of rehabilitation personnel, and the upgrading of numerous rehabilitation facilities.

Moreover, through its promotion of barrier-free access in Vietnam, the LWVF's support was instrumental in the design and recent passage of the Vietnamese Disability Act.



LWVF project sites

Accomplishments

Over 50,000 orthopedic devices fit and delivered



Vietnamese Disability Act passed with LWVF assistance



Over 300 rehabilitation personnel provided with U.S. and ISPO standard technical training



Seven rehabilitation centers renovated and upgraded



Private-sector partnerships established with Citibank, Ford Motor Company, and Kodak



Public-sector partnerships established with the U.S. President's Committee for Employment of Persons with Disabilities, the U.S. Social Security Administration, and the U.S. Department of State

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Health Volunteers Overseas

Since the fall of 1992, HVO has worked with Vietnam's Ministry of Health to improve the health sector's capacity to provide rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. The goals of this nationwide training project are as follows:

- to improve the quality of rehabilitation services and care delivered at the provincial level;
- to strengthen the knowledge and skills of faculty members at medical, nursing, and physical therapy schools throughout the country; and
- to facilitate the development of institutional relationships between U.S. medical and nursing schools and their Vietnamese counterparts.

In addition, under the current USAID grant, HVO is promoting indigenous nursing and physical therapy associations, providing support for and increasing the visibility of groups for persons with disabilities, and pilot-testing a medical-model team approach to rehabilitation.

Since 1992, HVO has received \$2,254,518 from USAID for its Vietnam project. HVO project sites include major medical schools in Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City. HVO physical therapy training is also provided at each of the project sites.

Prosthetics Outreach Foundation

In 1992, with USAID support under the LWVF program, POF introduced an automated technique for manufacturing prosthetic devices using its Seattle Shapemaker technology.

Since then, POF and its supporting clinic have produced and fit more than 6,000 artificial limbs using this technology.

In 1998, POF began setting up a research facility to design, test, and manufacture appropriate lower-limb components. The hallmark of this facility will be the development of a durable prosthetic foot. The foot is generally acknowledged as the weakest link in the prosthetic system. Prosthetic feet last only five months on average, while the rest of the system, barring physiological or anatomical changes in the user, can last well over three years.

POF has been conducting experiments in other aspects of limb technology since the early 1990's. Under its current USAID grant, POF is fabricating and testing a new monolithic transtibial limb. This type of limb could greatly reduce manufacturing time and increase affordability among the Vietnamese populations.

To date, POF has received \$600,000 in funding from USAID for its clinic in Hanoi and the research facility in Ba Vi, which is 100 kilometers northwest of Hanoi. Its current program is designed to be transferred to its Vietnamese partners this year.

Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped

Although VNAH's commitment to Vietnam began long before its inaugural trip with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) group in January 1992, it was the tremendous need observed during this trip that inspired VNAH to launch a pilot project to manufacture artificial limbs on site in southern Vietnam.

With assistance from USAID, the pilot project was expanded and sustained at two sites in southern Vietnam: Thu Duc, 45 minutes south of Ho Chi Minh City, and Can Tho, in the heart of the Mekhong Delta.

In addition to manufacturing and delivering over 13,000 prosthetic and orthotic devices and over 1,000 wheelchairs, VNAH has been instrumental in the design, development, and recent passage of the Vietnamese Disability Act. To this end, VNAH has partnered with the U.S. President's Committee for Employment of Persons with Disabilities and its Executive Director, John Lancaster, to address both technical and policy issues at the national level.

VNAH's program has won staunch support within the upper echelons of the Vietnamese government. With additional USAID support, VNAH will place a high-level U.S. expert in Hanoi to advise appropriate Prime-Minister-, National-Assembly-, and Ministry-level personnel.

To date, VNAH has received \$3,395,510 from USAID. This support has been leveraged with extensive contributions from the Nippon Foundation, DAV, Heart to Heart International, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



Wheelchair delivery during a VNAH outreach trip

Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation

In 1994, VVAF, in partnership with USAID, responded to a severe lack of services for disabled children by setting up the first thermoplastic orthotics rehabilitation program for the disabled. The clinic is located in the Rehabilitation Department of the Institute for the Protection of Children's Health (IPCH), Hanoi's premier children's hospital.

Thermoplastics offers disabled children a more durable, flexible, and comfortable form of orthotics. The clinic now sees an average of 80 to 100 children a day, most of whom are severely disabled. Of this number, an estimated two-thirds—60 children per day—could benefit from an orthotic intervention.

In response to this unmet need, VVAF has again partnered with USAID under the LWVF program to expand services by establishing a second clinic at Bach Mai Hospital in Hanoi and an outreach program

that delivers services to the disabled in rural areas around the capital city.

VVAF estimates that in-patient coverage at the clinics coupled with the outreach program will reach approximately 24,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries in the three years of the project, 1998 to 2000.

Since 1994, USAID has provided \$2,444,805 to VVAF for its programs in Hanoi. VVAF has leveraged its USAID support with contributions from the Kennedy-Kreiger Institute, the U.S. Information Agency, Citibank, and the Ford Motor Company.



Prosthetic limb assembly at the WV-supported Da Nang Rehabilitation Center.

World Vision

The WV project in Vietnam began in September 1991. After collecting initial data, the project identified four provincial rehabilitation centers for assistance: Vinh and Thanh Hoa in the North, and Da Nang and Qui Nhon in the central region. These four centers contain a catchment area of 14 provinces and an estimated population of 19 million people, 25 percent of the total population. To date, WV has provided over 30,000 prosthetic and orthotic devices to persons in need. Over 60 percent of the devices were lower-limb prostheses, and close to 70 percent of the appliances were fitted and delivered through outreach efforts.

During the course of its work in Vietnam, WV has stressed the need for quality as well as quantity. As a result, over 90 percent of the devices manufactured and delivered through WV-assisted centers achieve a standardized quality approval rating, decreasing waste and manufacturing time and increasing user satisfaction and device durability. Furthermore, WV has implemented a training-of-trainers approach to providing technical assistance. This sustainable strategy has been so successful that over 80 percent of WV technical assistance is now provided by an in-house cadre of trainers.

The WV project at the centers in Thanh Hoa, Vinh, Da Nang, and Qui Nhon will be transferred to its host-country partners in December 2000. Throughout the life of the WV project, USAID has provided \$3,657,939.

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